

Gadabouts Gardening Gambols by Alice Massey

On February 11, 2006, Marian Rollings and I braved the nastiest, coldest and rainiest weather we have had this year to travel to the Charleston Horticultural Society's Winter Symposium. The topic was "*Fusing Tropical Treasures into Lowcountry Landscapes*".

Within minutes the stormy weather was forgotten as we were magically transported to the tropics. Dennis Cathcart of Tropaflorea Nursery in Florida showed magnificent slides of unusual and colorful bromeliads being used in the landscape, then told us many of them are hardy in our zone 8b and 9 gardens. We came away with several pages of lists indicating which cultivars have demonstrated hardiness at below freezing temperatures. *Good to know!*

Next, Alan Shapiro, owner of the wholesale nursery Grandiflora (formerly San Felasco Nursery), showcased some of the latest tropical introductions that are known to do well in the Lowcountry. Alan is known throughout the Southeast as a leading figure in promoting the use of tropicals in the landscape.

The final speaker, Ruth Stiff, Kew Gardens Curator of "The Flowering Amazon" exhibit gave us a behind-the-scenes look at the exhibit currently on display at the Gibbs Art Museum in Charleston.

This was just a morning symposium and in those few hours I came away with a wealth of information. Be on the lookout for programs such as this one, you won't be sorry.

On March 25, the Midlands Master Gardeners put on their 16th annual Spring Symposium in Columbia. The speakers included brothers Bob and Bill Head (Two Heads are Better Than One). The Heads, formerly of the Horticulture Department at Clemson, own an upstate nursery and a plant development business. They showcased a number of native plant "re-introductions" and gave us information on how best to use them in your landscape. Walter Reeves (Gardening in Georgia), was dressed as Sherlock Holmes as he took us on a sleuthing mission to identify plant problems. And last, but not least, Dr. Richard Ludwig who, I felt, was far better in person than he is on television. Dr. Ludwig spoke on "*What is Outstanding Landscape Design*". He mentioned the English have a term "feckless mess" for the hodgepodge garden. This elicited much laughter as most avid gardeners have a penchant for collecting which often results in the feckless mess. All three presentations were outstanding.

The day also included several breakout sessions on landscaping and propagation, a silent auction, about a dozen plant vendors, garden related craft vendors, gardening demonstrations, over 75 door prizes—everything from a package of fertilizer to a truck load of mushroom compost, and a delicious lunch. The program packet included several packages of seeds from Renee Sheppard Seeds and Park Seed, a

package of Osmacote, a package of Messenger plant hormone fertilizer, and a Carolina Gardener magazine, 8 catalogs from unusual nurseries and untold brochures and coupons for garden related products.

I hope more Lowcountry MG's will attend this event next March. You will come away with information worth much more than the modest price of this symposium.